

990 lawyers fail LDC entry examinations

By Moses Wabubiri

The Law Council yesterday released exams for the mandatory pre-entry exams for lawyers, indicating that 814 out of the 1,812 who registered to sit for the paper passed.

With five of the lawyers who registered to sit for the exams skipping the examinations, a whopping 993 lawyers seeking to attain qualifications to practice as advocates of the High Court failed to attain the 50% pass mark.

The number of lawyers that passed the exams, according to the director of Law Development Centre (LDC), Nigel Frank Othembi, is higher than that of the two previous years.

However, the number of lawyers that passed pre-entry to the Bar Course in 2015 and 2016 was, according to Othembi, slightly above 500 and 600, respectively.

"We do not have control over the number of Bar Course students we admit. No one who has passed pre-entry will be locked out," Othembi said.

Othembi yesterday told *New Vision* that LDC's admission board was set to sit to admit all the lawyers that had passed pre-entry exams.

LDC still enjoys the monopoly of offering the Bar Course leading to the award of a post-graduate diploma in legal practice.

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Although LDC is amenable to the idea of introducing an evening programme to the Bar Course, modalities are yet to be agreed upon by all stakeholders, including the Law Council.

In the early 2000s, LDC was plagued by a high failure rate among students, as high as 90%, in some years.

To address the challenge which had resulted into a public uproar, LDC, together with the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and the Uganda Law Society, designed changes that included a pre-admission written examination for students, continuing education requirements for LDC lecturers and instruction in teaching methods for all academic staff.

The pre-entry examination has, however, proved a bane to lawyers, with some having to sit it three times, before passing. Some have decided to wave a white flag, settling for lives of clerks in courts or law firms.

However, the Law Council has sanctioned amendments to the legal regime, allowing lawyers to enroll at LDC for the Bar Course three years after passing pre-entry.